

# Plant has small air impact

PATRICE ST. GERMAIN  
[patrices@thespectrum.com](mailto:patrices@thespectrum.com)

ST. GEORGE - There are a lot of myths surrounding the proposed Toquop coal-fired power plant, including one claiming that St. George is downwind from the plant scheduled to be built 14 miles northeast of Mesquite in Lincoln County, Nev., said Thomas Johns.

Johns, the senior vice president of development for Sithe Global, said after a year of testing wind data, the St. George area is downwind from the 750-megawatt plant less than 3 percent of the time.

"That doesn't even matter because the plant impacts are very, very small," said Johns of the prevailing wind.

The statement, however, contradicts one made recently by National Weather Service meteorologist Mark Struthwolf.

"The general flow from late fall to the spring is from the west and southwest, so you will be getting smoke (from Toquop) up into the St. George area a majority of the time," Struthwolf said during a recent interview with The Spectrum & Daily News. He said for the majority of the year, Washington County gets wind from jet streams flowing in a westerly pattern with summertime flows coming from the south.

Officials of Sithe Global, the operator of the Toquop Energy Project, maintain that emissions from the plant are far below federal standards and only about 9 percent higher than emissions from the gas plant that was originally proposed at the site.

Because of the number of concerns residents in the area have about the proposed plant the Utah Department of Environmental Quality will have a public hearing on Wednesday.

Cheryl Heying, director of the division of air quality for the state, said the DEQ has reviewed the documentation sent to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection by Sithe Global.

Heying said the DEQ understands there are a lot of concerns in the area about the proposed plant and said after reviewing the documentation, it is consistent with federal requirements.

"The EPA requirements are restrictive. Everything can always get better and that facility (Toquop) is consistent with all the requirements that are out there right now," Heying said.

Heying said DEQ always is concerned about air quality and has been talking with DEQ counterparts in Nevada about not only Toquop but two other coal-fired plants proposed and about mercury emissions from the gold mines to make sure the state is doing everything it can to minimize impacts.

"We are working with the folks in Nevada. We have talked several times," Heying said. "But there will be a lot of conversation (by the NDEP) before they write that permit."

Although some politicians and communities have vocalized concerns or have outright opposed the plant, some have not made any public declarations about Toquop.

Last week, a resolution opposing Toquop was on the town of Rockville's agenda but the resolution was tabled, said Rockville Mayor Dan McGuire.

McGuire said he had problems with the resolution as it was written, which talked about tonnage of pollution. He said the Town Council should not stand to oppose everything.

"I don't buy signing into it," McGuire said. "There are two sides to every story and I don't like rubber-stamping resolutions."

McGuire said he is in favor of alternative energy and said he and his wife purchase 850 kilowatts of alternative power per month through Rocky Mountain Power's Blue Sky program.

Toquop spokesman Frank Maisano said Toquop will employ all the latest, cleanest technology.

"We are doing things that have never been done before," Maisano said. "Some plants have used air cooling or scrubbers but no one has done it all together yet."

Knowing the legacy of distrust in the Washington County area with Downwinders and dealing with the "Ghost of the past," Maisano said it has been difficult to overcome issues.

"We know the technologies work and at some point, we have to build it and show people and they have to take that leap of faith with us at some time," Maisano. "The challenge we face is we mean what we say and we say what we mean and we will live up to what we say."

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